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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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The Honorable Tim Kaine Governor of Virginia State Capitol Richmond VA 23219

### Dear Governor Kaine:

I write today to express my concern about Virginia's decision to close rest stops on interstate highways throughout the state. I think this is a mistake and believe it could very well pose serious highway safety threats for all who drive these highways. I especially question where will tired truckers pull over to rest or where will cars be able to safely switch drivers or stop to tie down a loose load from a rooftop carrier?

My concern stems from my long-time interest in highway safety issues, including truck safety. When I was chairman of the House transportation appropriations subcommittee, traffic safety was one of my top priorities. After reviewing the growing number of truck-related accidents on our nation's highways, I pushed for the creation of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to oversee the trucking industry with its mission to help reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses.

Long-haul truck drivers are regulated on the number of hours they are supposed to drive before taking specific rest breaks. I worry to think that with fewer rest stops in Virginia, fatigued truckers may be forced to drive additional miles to find a place to stop for their required breaks. That scenario sets up a recipe for disaster.

I understand from the statements issued by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) that the decision to close rest areas is a result of the state's budget woes. While I can appreciate the state's predicament, closing rest stops to save \$9 million out of a \$2.6 billion shortfall, I believe, is symptomatic of the much larger problem facing the state that has been avoided for too long: the lack of a viable plan to pay for Virginia's transportation needs.

You will recall my letter to you of last December recommending that you establish a bipartisan commission led by former Governors Gerald Baliles and George Allen to examine the state's transportation needs and provide comprehensive recommendations on how to ensure that Virginia's mobility needs are met. As I noted then, a bipartisan blue ribbon commission could take politics out of the equation and provide recommendations that are based on need.

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I urge you to take action to start the process for the state to come to grips with its transportation needs so that the state does not have to resort to a band-aid approach to save \$9 million that risks the safety of its residents and all those who drive Virginia's highways.

Again, the safety of all those who drive on Virginia highways is at risk. Please reconsider keeping these rest stops open.

I appreciate your consideration of this issue of importance to all Virginians.

